



U.S. Representative **ROBERT T. MATSUI**

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<http://www.house.gov/matsui>

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND CONGRESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

HON. ROBERT T. MATSUI (1941-2005), Member of Congress 1979-2005

Key Biographical Facts

Born: September 17, 1941 (Sacramento, California).

Died: 10:10pm, Saturday, January 1, 2005 (Bethesda Naval Hospital, Maryland).

U.C. Berkeley, A.B., 1963.

U.C. Hastings College of the Law, J.D., 1966.

Private Law Practice (Sacramento).

Sacramento City Council, 1971-78.

Sacramento Vice Mayor, 1977.

Member of Congress, Elected to 14 two-year terms beginning in 1978.

Winning percentage in November 2004 Election: 71.4%.

Survived by: Wife Doris Matsui; son Brian Matsui and daughter-in-law Amy Matsui; granddaughter Anna Matsui.

Biographical Narrative

Robert T. Matsui first campaigned in 1978 for the congressional seat serving Sacramento, California, persuading voters that he would bring to office "a new form of statesmanship." Having entered the race as an underdog candidate, then-vice mayor Matsui was helped to victory by a team of hundreds of committed volunteers. Through twenty-six years of service in the House of Representatives, Matsui fulfilled his promise. He frequently received accolades for bringing extraordinary levels of dedication, competence, innovation, and integrity to public service. Representative Matsui was acknowledged as a model for congressional accomplishment both in service to his district and to the nation. With special concern for public safety in Sacramento, he drove a two-decade fight for adequate flood control, and secured federal participation in the city's transformation and growth during his congressional tenure. As a senior member of the Committee on Ways and Means, Representative Matsui has most recently led the congressional fight to preserve Social Security, but has also provided leadership roles in trade, tax, and social justice issues during a quarter century on the Committee.

As a senior member of the Committee on Ways and Means, Representative Matsui was intricately and substantially involved with the Committee's portfolio of complex public policy issues including tax, international trade, Social Security, health care, and welfare reform. He most recently served as ranking minority member of the Social Security Subcommittee, and previously held posts as ranking minority member of the Oversight Subcommittee, acting chair of the Trade Subcommittee, and acting chair of the Human Resources Subcommittee. Matsui played a crucial role in developing and passing legislation that has become the foundation for some of the Ways and Means Committee's most successful programs over the past two decades.

Representative Matsui was a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and Hastings College of Law. He was inspired to enter the legal field by reading the autobiography of famed trial lawyer Clarence Darrow and to public service by President John F. Kennedy's speech challenging Americans to ask what they could do for their country. He founded his own Sacramento law practice in 1967 and won a seat on the Sacramento City Council in 1971, becoming vice mayor of the city in 1977.

He was married to the former Doris Okada, who is Senior Advisor and Director of Government Relations at the firm of Collier Shannon Scott, PLLC. Until December of 1998, Mrs. Matsui worked as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Public Liaison for President Clinton. Representative Matsui is also survived by his son and daughter-in law, Brian and Amy Matsui, and by his granddaughter Anna Matsui.

Representative Matsui had a reputation as one of the best vote-counters in the House, and was a Democratic whip-at-large. He was intimately involved with the Democratic Party throughout his career, serving at various points as treasurer and deputy chair of the Democratic National Committee, and most recently as chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, leading the party's congressional electoral efforts for the 2004 cycle. He was also a regent of the Smithsonian Institution, a position he held since 1999.

SOCIAL SECURITY—LEADING OPPONENT TO PRIVATIZATION SCHEMES

Preserving Social Security for future generations. Representative Matsui was the Democratic leader in the effort to reform and preserve Social Security, providing a strong public face and voice in opposition to emerging Republican plans to gut the system under the auspices of “privatization.” Congressional Quarterly’s Politics in America called Matsui “one of the few lawmakers in either party with a deep understanding of the complexities of the program.” He worked tirelessly to expose the fact that such proposals would cut benefits, raise the retirement age, or reduce retirees’ standard of living, while further exacerbating Social Security’s financial challenges. Representative Matsui ardently believed in this social insurance program, without which more than half of Americans over the age of 65 would fall below the poverty line. He was the only member of the Social Security Subcommittee serving during the 108th Congress who also served on the Subcommittee during the reform of 1983, bringing a wealth of knowledge and practical experience to the current debate. Matsui led with conviction, determined to reform Social Security incrementally to ensure its long-term solvency without compromising its fundamental purpose: to reduce or eliminate poverty among America’s elderly, persons with disabilities, and surviving dependents who have lost a wage-earning family member. Ultimately, Representative Matsui fought to preserve Social Security because he believed that all of these groups are entitled to the stability of a guaranteed income that allows them to live with dignity.

TRADE AND TAX—AN ECONOMIC EXPANSIONIST ALWAYS CONCERNED FOR FAIRNESS

Supported Trade, Led Passage of NAFTA. For his long-standing commitment to free and open international trade, Representative Matsui also gained a reputation as an effective, strategic leader. While Matsui was acting chairman of the Trade Subcommittee in 1993, President Clinton turned to him to lead one of the most heated congressional battles of the decade: the fight to pass the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Working in concert with Republicans and Democrats, Matsui was a driver in passing this keystone of modern American trade policy. He also spearheaded successful bipartisan efforts to gain Congressional approval of the Uruguay Round Agreements, which led to the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the 2000 approval of Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with China. His expert voice was crucial in efforts to secure Fast-Track trade negotiating authority over the last decade, although he supported and opposed various proposals based on their detailed merits and weaknesses, including opposing the most recent Fast-Track proposal considered in Congress during 2001 and 2002. Throughout these trade debates, Matsui constantly advocated environmental protections and the provision of fair compensation and trade adjustment to American workers whose jobs were negatively impacted by the lowering of barriers to trade.

Intellectually-honest and Fair-Minded Tax Writer. A strong proponent of fiscal responsibility, Representative Matsui was also a leader on tax issues in the House. He helped create the Research and Development Tax Credit in 1981 to fuel innovation in the American economy and has been part of a bipartisan coalition ensuring its extension, while also calling for Congress to make the credit permanent. He was part of the Committee effort in 1986 that resulted in total reform of the tax code, and had used that expertise in his advocacy to bring balance back to the federal budget today. In the same spirit of tax equity, Matsui was instrumental in the 1993 expansion of the Earned-Income Tax Credit for working poor families with children. Frequently traveling with detailed charts and graphs to explain the nuances of federal budgeting, Matsui gained a reputation among both his congressional colleagues and constituents for his thoughtful, intelligent, intellectually-honest approach to federal fiscal policy. In recent years, Representative Matsui has supported the spirit of tax relief, while consistently opposing tax deferral schemes that simply burden future generations with debt.

SOCIAL JUSTICE—BELIEVING IN BASIC RIGHTS AND IN AMERICA’S CHILDREN

Fighting for Children’s Health. Representative Matsui believed that America owed to all citizens to provide basic freedom and opportunities, and to show leadership on these issues in the world. The first two bills he introduced in Congress sought to strengthen enforcement of child support payments. He especially believed that all children in the United States should have absolute access to health care, and he drafted legislation in 1991 that became the backbone for child welfare reform, proposing to expand the social services available to at-risk children and families in the child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice systems. In 1994, Matsui was a leader in the fight over welfare changes, arguing that adequate job training and education programs were essential to helping parents achieve financial self sufficiency without hurting the Nation’s disadvantaged children. In 1997, he worked with a bipartisan team of congressional leaders to introduce a bill to provide health care coverage to uninsured children, the CHILD ACT. This bill became the basis of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), a groundbreaking effort that has made significant progress in providing low-income children with health insurance. Matsui believed the best way to invest in America’s future was to ensure the health, education, and opportunities of new generations.

Won Redress for Japanese-Americans Interned during World War II. A third-generation Japanese American, Matsui was six months old when he and his family were taken from Sacramento and interned by the U.S. government at the Tule Lake camp in 1942, after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1988, Representative Matsui helped shepherd the Japanese-American Redress Act through Congress, in which the government formally apologized for the World War II internment program and offered token compensation to victims. He was also instrumental in the designation of Manzanar, a wartime relocation center 200 miles northeast of Los Angeles, as a national historic site and in obtaining land on the National Mall in Washington, DC, for the memorial to Japanese American patriotism in World War II.

INVESTING IN AND PROTECTING SACRAMENTO

Won Adequate Flood Control with Folsom Dam Raise. Sacramento-area issues always retained their preeminence in Representative Matsui’s priorities. No goal was more important to Matsui than bringing adequate flood protection to his hometown. Hit by massive floods in 1986 and 1997, many areas of Sacramento existed with only 85-year flood protection—less than half the 200-year level most experts agree the area needs. The profound public safety and economic implications of the flood risk to the region made this an urgent and essential policy need. In 2003, Matsui secured federal authorization to raise the Folsom Dam seven-feet, which will bring Sacramento’s flood protection above the 200-year level. Completion of this project will allow the flood control system to handle a storm far greater than anything in the recorded history of the watershed. It marks Representative Matsui’s signature contribution to public safety in Sacramento.

Won Funding for New Courthouse and Light Rail to Anchor Downtown Redevelopment. As the city has grown tremendously during Matsui’s time in office, he devoted a great deal of attention to ensuring federal participation in Sacramento’s infrastructure projects, including securing over \$100 million for expansion of the city’s light rail public transit system. Among the most notable victories was Matsui’s successful effort for a new \$142 million federal courthouse, and the 1,200 jobs it created to anchor downtown redevelopment. Matsui recently sought and received \$5 million for a project to bridge over I-5 to reconnect the revitalized downtown core with the waterfront. In continuing the waterfront development, Matsui secured funding to expand the pedestrian walkway on Tower Bridge, with special attention given to maintaining the historical integrity of the structure. Widening the pedestrian access will alleviate congestion along the primary link between the Capitol Mall, Old Sacramento, the Riverfront Promenade and Raley Field as well as River Walk Park on the west side of the river.

Protected Sacramento’s Environment. Matsui ensured that transportation development was also environmentally responsible. Year after year, he secured funding to transform and maintain environmental friendly Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses, replacing those that run on diesel. He also regularly supported efforts to enhance technology to keep traffic moving and bring transportation options to the region’s high unemployment areas.

Awards Sampling

Representative Matsui's legislative achievements were recognized by a broad range of local and national organizations. In 2001, the Capitol Unity Council honored Matsui with the Joe Serna, Jr. Unity Award. The Child Welfare League of America has twice named him Congressional Advocate of the Year, in 1992 and 1994. Also in 1992, Matsui was recognized by the American Public Transit Association for his success in promoting mass transit. The Small Business Council presented him with its Congressional Award in 1988 and the Small Business Export Association gave him its Ronald H. Brown Export Enhancement award in 1998. The Anti-Defamation League honored him with its Lifetime Achievement Award. In April 2003, the American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails presented Representative Matsui with the 2003 Clean Air Award for his efforts to reduce smog in the Sacramento region.